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# American Art Journal.

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## THE HERALD'S OPERATIC ENTER-PRIZE.

Next to managing the *New York Herald*, the great ambition of Mr. James Gordon Bennett has always been to manage the Italian Opera. He was shrewd enough, however, not to take upon himself any of the responsibilities attached to the managerial position, being content to manage the Manager, thus generously playing the monkey and leaving the Impresario to handle the piping hot chestnuts. So long as the manager submitted to the Bennettorial dictation, the Italian Opera was a lovely institution, and viewed from the best private box, the gift of the grateful manager, the house was a blaze of beauty and fashion, and the stage teemed with the greatest singers in the world, while the greatest star of the whole was the "indomitable," the "indefatigable," the "inscrutable," the "invincible Max," the "Prince of Strategists" and the beau-ideal of an Impresario. Everything was preternaturally serene; it seemed as though the millenium had come and the lion and the lamb were playing leap-frog together.

There was a considerable change, however, when Max assumed the soubriquet of "independent Max," a prefix never uttered or dreamed of by the *Herald*. The pastoral beauty and holy quiet of the scene disappeared; the roseate hue changed to flaring yellow; the happy family dissolved partnership, and the Lion forthwith proceeded to devour the Lamb. But the King of Beasts was aged and purblind, and his failing teeth got entangled in his straggling mane; his claws had lost their point, but his roar was horrible as the frisky lamb, taking advantage of his general decrepitude, planted his heels, now on the ribs, now on the snout, and again in close proximity to the lashing tail of the indignant but impotent monarch.

Vanquished and mortified, the Monarch of the Forest, unable to bite, roared daily in large type, in barely allowable "billings-gate," its sorrows to the world. But alas! the tale of its grievances fell upon unsympathizing ears, and in its old age, saddened by defeat and mourning after its vanished privileges, it stood alone friendless and unpitied. Its rage was vented not only on the "indomitable Max," but upon the audiences, and as for the artists, their shapely figures assumed distorted proportions, their grace was changed to vulgar awkwardness, their passionate declamation to boisterous ranting, their position as first class, sank to fifth rate, and a universal catarrh seized hold of their physical natures and

destroyed every vestige of voice. Such human wrecks as they became in an inconceivably short space of time, the world never saw before, and the audience went prepared with bandages, crutches, splints, cordials, and ambalances, to administer to the expected corps of incapables and incurables. But, strange to say, they found the artists as good, bodily and vocally, as before, and the many wondered at the extraordinary development of the organ of imagination, exhibited by the head of the *Herald*, and all decided that this development had taken the form of disease, and that imagination had degenerated into lying.

Not being able by frightening or by bullying, to recover its lost control of the affairs of the Opera, the *Herald* has taken under its special patronage, every one-horse operatic bubble that has floated to the surface. It has endeavored to elevate the baldest mediocrity into first-class talent, but its mendacious puffing, instead of sustaining the enterprises, rendered certain and has hastened their dissolution.

The last one-horse opera that Mr. Bennett took under his special and dreadfully fatal patronage, if he did not originate and sustain it financially, is the enterprise of Signor Antonio Mora, who from a somewhat obscure teacher, suddenly became a "celebrated and accomplished musician" and a "new Impresario." Flaunting and flimsy editorials, conceived in the Bombastes-Furioso style, announced that the great operatic epoch had arrived; that New York was now to take its stand as one of the great musical centres of the world; that the artists were all nightingales with the unusual appendages of golden-plumaged heads, and bright many-colored tails, and that the new director and impresario had the abilities of Gye and Mapleson combined, and his baton had the concentrated power and magnetism of Jullien, Costa and Mellon.

In addition to this, the editorials proclaimed in a swaggering tone, that the world of Fashion was at fever heat in expectation of this epoch, and that the world had never seen and never would see again, such dazzlingly brilliant assemblages of combined beauty and wealth, as would grace the French Theatre at each representation given by the "new Impresario." Alas! for the *Herald's* peculiar influence! If the fashionable world had a fever of excitement, it had it so severely that it was obliged to stay at home. The house was well filled the first night, by what means we can well understand, but the second night the general public and even the free-ticket-men, seemed to have caught the fever, for the house was scarcely one-third full, and the small portion of humanity present, was frigidly, hopelessly cold.

The fair artist so fatally puffed in the *Herald*, has advantages which, under other circum-

stances, would have secured her success. She is personally charming both in face and figure and her demeanor is eminently graceful and ladylike. Her voice is of good quality but unequal in power. The upper tones are pure and capable of enforcement, but the lower tones, though also pure, are weak and cannot be used with much effect. She is well educated and sings with feeling, but the timbre of her voice precludes the expression of grand sentiment. As an actress she is natural and graceful. On the whole she is an attractive artist, and we are sorry that she was offered as a sacrifice at the shrine of the *Herald's* vengeance. The other artists were good, but the orchestra and chorus, and the whole surroundings wore that air of itinerancy, which always accompanies fugitive and ill-digested musical enterprises.

In the meantime we are waiting for that epoch! We are also anxious about that "musical centre," which is now about as invisible as the great "Fenian centre," and we want to know if the *Herald* has definitely fixed its locality. It once, with a monstrous flourish of brazen instruments, located it in Chicago, but unluckily it did not stay fixed. We are also curious to know what Mr. Bennett is going to do with Signor Mora? He has been hoisted up into sight, he has been made a new Impresario, he has been created an "accomplished musician," and now what is Mr. Bennett going to do with him? He ought not to let him down suddenly. He ought at least to place him on his editorial staff. The appointment would create a sensation, for an accomplished musician on the repertorial staff of the *Herald*, has never been since the first penny issue of that paper.

All the bright anticipations raised by the *Herald's* editorials having failed, as usual, we shall have to content ourselves with the facts of Max Maretzek's management, well assured that his promises will be fulfilled, and that his established reign will put an end to the little peddling schemes, which are at once an injury and a disgrace to Musical Art.

## MUSIC OF THE WEEK.

The present week has been signalized by a futile attempt to establish an Italian Opera by an irresponsible party, unknown to fame. It was intended as a flank movement against Maretzek and the Academy of Music, and was concocted at Washington Heights. The failure was magnificent, and nothing more need be said.

We have also had a dash of German Opera at one of the Broadway Theatres, which we understand did not amount to much in performance, and still less in profit. Opera enterprises seem to spring up like toad-stools, and are about as valuable, and as much respected. Whether this affair is to be continued or not, we do not know.